

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 12, 2008

Chairman Daniel Inouye
Ranking Member Kay Bailey Hutchison
Committee on Commerce, Science and
Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Chairman James Oberstar
Ranking Member John Mica
Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Inouye, Chairman Oberstar, Ranking Member Hutchison, and Ranking Member Mica:

As you prepare to resolve the differences between the Senate and House Amtrak reauthorization legislation, we ask that you support Section 207 in S. 294. This section requires a one time evaluation of the former Pioneer Route to determine whether a level of passenger demand exists that would warrant reinstating the entire service or segments of that service.

Over the years, we have been working to restore the Amtrak Pioneer Route that provided passenger service through the western states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Utah, and Wyoming until it was discontinued in 1997. For many rural Americans, this route represented the only major intercity transportation link to the rest of the country.

The number of people riding Amtrak increased 13.9% in July and 10.5% in August from a year earlier, as high gas prices caused more commuters to rely on intercity rail. While the railroad is seeing heavy jumps in populated areas, travelers in rural parts of the country are also getting on board where Amtrak is available. We believe that there is substantial interest in reinstating the Pioneer Route in our states and we are asking that you support this study as a first step.

We appreciate your leadership in strengthening Amtrak and look forward to working with you to expand intercity passenger rail service in western states.

Sincerely,










